

What Prisoners Should Know About Social Security

Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits generally are not payable for months that you are confined to a jail, prison or certain other public institutions for commission of a crime. And, you are not automatically eligible for Social Security or SSI benefits when you are released.

Who Can Get Benefits?

Social Security disability benefits can be paid only to people who have recently worked and paid Social Security taxes, and who are unable to work because of a serious medical condition that is expected to last at least a year or result in death. The fact that an individual is a recent parolee or is unemployed does not qualify as a disability. No benefits are payable for months in which you are confined to a jail, prison or other correctional facility or certain other public institutions.

Social Security retirement benefits can be paid only to people who are 62 or older. Generally, you must have worked and paid taxes into Social Security for 10 years to be eligible. Benefits are usually not paid for the months you have been sentenced to a jail, prison or correctional facility or confined to certain public institutions for committing a crime.

SSI benefits can be paid to people who are 65 or older or blind or disabled and who have low income and few resources. No SSI benefits are payable for any month throughout which you reside in a jail, prison or certain other public institutions.

You Must Apply For Benefits

In all cases, you must apply for benefits with a Social Security office if you think you qualify.

Although you cannot receive benefits while you are confined to a jail, prison or certain other public institutions, your spouse or children, if they are eligible, can be paid benefits on your record.

Social Security Can Help You In Other Ways

For example:

If you've lost your Social Security card, contact Social Security for a replacement. Many employers will not hire you, and many social service agencies will not be able to help you without a card.

If you want to find out how much your future Social Security benefits will be or if you want to check the earnings that have been reported for you to Social Security, you can get a free *Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement*. Call Social Security's toll-free number at **1--800--772--1213** and ask for Form SSA--7004.

Remember: All Social Security services are free. The best place to get Social Security information is from a Social Security office. Call us at **1--800--772--1213** business days from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The Social Security Administration treats all calls confidentially—whether they're made to our toll-free number or to one of our local offices. We also want to ensure that you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative listen to some incoming and outgoing telephone calls.